



REDISCOVER DAIRY

The Consumer Education Project of Milk SA

MILK SPLAT

JULY 2014

DAIRY PRODUCTS HELP PREVENT TYPE 2 DIABETES

World health which is already burdened by the obesity epidemic, faces a new threat as more and more people of all ages are being diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2 DM). South Africa is no exception - 9.6% of our population have Type 2 DM, while 19% suffer from glucose imbalance conditions such as insulin resistance. These are alarming statistics that should be addressed as soon as possible.

Dairy and Type 2 DM

The role of dairy products as potential dietary preventatives of Type 2 DM has recently been examined in a number of studies. Some of these studies found positive results, while others did not find a direct link to Type 2 DM.

Positive results

In a 10-year study participants who had the highest dairy intake, had a 59% lower risk of developing Metabolic Syndrome (MS). MS is a cluster of conditions including abdominal obesity, insulin resistance, high blood pressure, and increased blood fat levels, which can lead to heart disease and Type 2 DM. Another study, found that eating cheeses and fermented dairy products (e.g. yoghurt, maas) was associated with lower blood glucose levels, both after fasting and meals.

Meta-analyses

When researchers combine the results of a number of studies that have similar designs and meet similar strict scientific requirements, this is called a 'meta-analysis'. Meta-analyses carried out on dairy product intake and Type 2 DM have consistently reported that eating dairy foods significantly reduced

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the risk of developing Type 2 DM by between 11% and 15%. These results were even stronger when low-fat dairy products were consumed because the risk of Type 2 DM was lowered by up to 19%. In contrast, full-cream milk and full-fat dairy did not lower the risk of Type 2 DM significantly.

How does dairy lower the risk?

At present we are not quite sure how dairy foods lower the risk of Type 2 DM, but researchers have suggested a number of possible mechanisms. For example, dairy products may have a positive effect by encouraging weight loss or preventing weight gain, lowering blood pressure, or helping you feel full for longer (increased satiety) so that you eat less and consume fewer kilojoules. The high magnesium and calcium contents of dairy products may help insulin receptors work more efficiently and therefore prevent insulin resistance, or reduce fat uptake, and alter other MS characteristics. Proteins found in dairy foods like whey, are known to increase satiety and lower blood pressure, while a higher dairy protein intake may also contribute to the positive effect that can reduce the risk of Type 2 DM.

Conclusion

All efforts should be made to prevent the constant increase in the number of patients suffering from Type 2 DM in South Africa. Experts agree that to achieve this we need to eat a balanced diet and become more active by doing daily exercise. The latest research indicates that if we include low-fat dairy in our diets we may be able to reduce the risk of developing Type 2 DM significantly, something that is indeed worth trying for the health of the nation.

A detailed Nutrition Review on this topic can be found on the www.rediscoverdairy.co.za website. Click on 'Dairy Based Nutrition' and scroll down to 'The role of dairy in diabetes'.

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